

VZCZCXR05158

PP RUEHBZ RUEHMR RUEHPA RUEHRN RUEHTRO

DE RUEHNK #0361/01 1481657

ZNY CCCCC ZZH

P 281657Z MAY 09

FM AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8468

INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE

RUCNMGH/MAGHREB COLLECTIVE

RUEHZO/AFRICAN UNION COLLECTIVE

RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 0675

RUEHDO/AMEMBASSY DOHA 0608

RUEHMD/AMEMBASSY MADRID 2217

RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 1024

RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN 0690

RUEHPG/AMEMBASSY PRAGUE 0245

RUEHSM/AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM 0083

RHMFIS/HQ USAFRICOM STUTTGART GE

RHMFIS/COMSOCOEUR VAIHINGEN GE

RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS

RUEHDS/USMISSION USAU ADDIS ABABA

RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO 0684

RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 1133

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 NOUAKCHOTT 000361

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/28/2019

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KPAO](#) [KDEM](#) [MR](#) [PHUM](#)

SUBJECT: MAURITANIA: POLITICAL ROUNDUP FOR THE WEEK OF MAY 24-28

REF: A. NOUAKCHOTT 357

[1B](#). NOUAKCHOTT 356

[1C](#). NOUAKCHOTT 354

[1D](#). NOUAKCHOTT 358

[1E](#). NOUAKCHOTT 24

[1F](#). 07 NOUAKCHOTT 986

Classified By: Ambassador Mark M. Boulware for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[11. \(C\) Summary:](#) The electoral campaign has started without much participation or enthusiasm. General Aziz's campaigning has taken over Nouakchott, giving the not-so-mistaken impression that there is only one candidate in this presidential race. Nevertheless, the campaign's empty tents make it obvious he is not as popular as he claims to be. A pro-coup party decided to boycott the elections and EmbOffs met with Electoral Commission officials in the Trarza region only to discover that electoral lists have not been posted and the CENI is barely up and running. While the last mediation attempt unfolds, the human rights situation worsens with almost daily reports of arrests, beatings, threats and repression. An incident of ethnic violence took place at the University of Nouakchott, a member of a Sahraoui progressive group requested funds to democratize the Polisario, and EmbOffs returning to the country were screened for swine flu at the airport. End summary.

[12. \(SBU\) Campaign kicks off:](#) There seems to be only one candidate in this presidential race. Nouakchott is full of Aziz's electoral propaganda and the other candidates' campaigning materials are nowhere to be seen. Aziz's campaign has installed scores of tents with bright lights, loudspeakers, video screens and giant Aziz posters all over the city. The road from Rosso to Nouakchott is also lined with tents. PolOff went for a drive late in the evening of May 27 and saw that most of the tents were almost empty with only a few people, mostly women, sitting under them. Nevertheless, the loudspeakers were blasting music and campaign slogans until late at night. The ambience was more lively at Aziz's Union Pour la Republique (UPR) party headquarters where approximately 80 people had congregated. According to local press reports, Aziz's campaign is paying 10,000 ouguiyas (approximately \$40 USD) per day to anyone who puts up a tent in his name. Press reported some tents have been vandalized or burned by the opposition and a woman died

when tents installed in a hurry collapsed on her. Almost one week before the election, Mauritanians seem to be going through the motions without much enthusiasm or excitement.

¶13. (C) Senegalese mediation continues: Senegalese efforts to mediate the Mauritanian crisis continued this week, though no tangible results have been achieved yet. The FNDD and RFD sent delegations to Dakar May 27 that will participate in talks scheduled for May 28. Before leaving, FNDD and RFD representatives told Ambassador they felt like they were negotiating "under the gun" (Ref C).

¶14. (C) Maalouma arrested: RFD senator and popular Mauritanian musician Maalouma Mint Meyydhah was arrested May 24 after entering Mauritania from Senegal. Several boxes of her new album were confiscated by Customs; the album is strongly anti-coup. In a meeting with Ambassador on May 27, Maalouma stated she has received death threats and her phones have been tapped. She also complained the regime now forces her to submit to the police an advance list of songs she intends to play in concerts and prevents her from publicizing her shows. Maalouma said Aziz's tribe, the Ouled Bisbaa, are "a vindictive tribe" and she is considering seeking political asylum, possibly in the U.S. She also asked the Ambassador to intervene on behalf of her brother, who was recently denied a visa to the US to accompany her in one of her concerts. Maalouma claims her brother has the same name as an Algerian terrorist, which has prevented him from getting visas to the US.

NOUAKCHOTT 00000361 002 OF 003

¶15. (SBU) Swine flu: EmbOffs returning from leave in Morocco were screened for swine flu at Nouakchott International Airport on May 26. A doctor had a hand-held thermometer unit and took the temperature of every passenger before allowing him or her to enter the main terminal building.

¶16. (C) Regime cracks down on Conscience et Resistance: Boston-based Mauritanian human rights activist Nasser Weddady informed PolOff that many members of the clandestine political group Conscience et Resistance had reported being permanently followed by police agents. Weddady said the repression comes in response to a recent Conscience and Resistance anti-coup text message campaign that sent messages condemning Aziz.

¶17. (C) UFP headquarters raided: On May 25, police entered UFP headquarters in Nouadhibou and attacked party members with tear gas and batons. According to UFP President Mohamed Ould Maouloud, this is the first time in Mauritanian history that the police have violated a political party's headquarters.

¶18. (U) Police repress FNDD/RFD march: On May 25, Tawassoul Secretary General Mouhamed El Bareck was savagely beaten by the police, who broke his arm. Police use tear gas to disperse protesters and arrested several demonstrators.

¶19. (U) CEN-SAD will send observers: The Community of Sahelo-Saharan States (CEN-SAD) confirmed it will send observers to the June 6 election. The statement was made in a May 27 communiqué released after a briefing on the Mauritanian situation by junta "Foreign Minister" Mohamed Mhmoud Ould Mohamedou.

¶10. (SBU) Ould Weddad boycotts election: Taya strongman Louleid Ould Weddad's party "Rassemblement du Peuple Mauritanien" (RDPM) announced it intends to boycott the June election. For many Mauritanians, Weddad's decision to reject Aziz highlights deep and growing divisions in the Mauritanian opposition (a local Weddad and his followers

are known for always standing on the side of power. His migration to the opposition has made a deep impression on Mauritanians.

¶11. (C) EmbOffs travel to Trarza region: EmbOffs meet with CENI representatives, witnessed irregularities and discovered the CENI is barely functional (Refs A and B).

¶12. (C) Meetings with presidential candidats: PolAsst met with presidential candidates Sghir Ould M'Bareck (Ref D) and Hamidou Baba Kane (eptel).

¶13. (U) Ethnic tensions at the Universiy: According to local press, a female White Moor student was beaten on May 27 by an Afro-Mauritanian student at the University of Nouakchott's Scence Department. The following day, a group of hite Moor men savagely beat up the Afro-Mauritanian student in retribution.

¶14. (C) Meeting withPolisario dissident: Mahjoub Saleck, General Cordinator of the dissident group "Khat Echahid" (ine of the Martyr), met with Ambassador on May 28 o request funds to "democratize Polisario." He acused Polisario leaders of receiving money from eneral Aziz and

making money on the Sahrawi people's plight. His group, which calls for democratization and modernization, would use the funds to publish a newspaper and to create a web site. Saleck stated that many Sahrawi have turned to all sorts of trafficking to survive. He explained how difficult it is for them to obtain passports and to move freely. His group has repeatedly attempted to contact US Embassy Rabat and Algiers but has been unable to because the Algerians and Moroccans control all their movements. Saleck previously met with DCM Dennis Hankins (Refs E and F); this is the fourth time he has visited the Embassy. Ambassador noted that Western Sahara

NOUAKCHOTT 00000361 003 OF 003

issues were handled elsewhere, but promised to pass along his message.

BOULWARE